

Statement on the Death of King Hussein I of Jordan

February 7, 1999

Hillary and I are deeply saddened by the news that King Hussein of Jordan has passed away. I had prayed this day would not come soon. But God has called King Hussein to his reward. The prayers of all Americans go out to the royal family and the Jordanian people.

No words can convey what King Hussein meant to the people he led for nearly half a century. Words cannot convey what he meant to me as a friend and inspiration. Through good times and bad, through health and illness, he showed the power of a strong will applied to a worthy cause. It takes a rare kind of courage to be a peacemaker—the courage to learn from the past and imagine a better future. When peace finally comes to the Middle East, his name will be inscribed upon it. That day, King Hussein will smile on us one more time.

I had the honor of seeing him just a few weeks ago, as he was about to return home. There was no hint of the struggle he was waging. Instead, he spoke with his usual passion and humanity about Jordan's well-being, the future of the Arab world, the Palestinian cause, and peace with Israel.

To Queen Noor, to Crown Prince Abdullah, to the King's family, and to the people of Jordan, Hillary and I send our condolences. The United States stands with you—today, tomorrow, and in the future. I ask all Americans to remember this good man and his family.

Remarks on the Death of King Hussein I of Jordan

February 7, 1999

Today the world mourns the loss of one of its great leaders, King Hussein of Jordan. I mourn the loss of a partner and friend. He was a magnificent man, and like so many, I loved and admired him.

King Hussein once wrote, "I believe we must live with courage and will. I must do so because, regardless of any difficulties I

face, when the time comes for me to lose my life, I would at least have done my best."

He did far better than that. A humble man and a king; a leader whose nobility came not from his title but his character; a man who believed that we are all God's children, bound to live together in mutual respect and tolerance.

King Hussein was ennobled. Many times his life was threatened, but each brush with mortality ennobled him. He learned that God only gives us a limited number of opportunities and that we must make the most of them. Surely, he did.

As he survived, Jordan survived. He grew in wisdom, and so did Jordan. He grew in stature, and so did Jordan. He won the respect and admiration of the entire world, and so did his beloved Jordan.

We remember his voice, each word slowly said, followed by a pause, a moment for silent reflection, as if he were reminding us that it is wise to think before we speak, to speak before we act. His manner was as strong and calming as his message.

We remember him piloting his plane, traveling wherever his cause took him; flying at night in the years when courage and stealth were required just to speak to one's enemies; soaring in the sunlight above Jerusalem when the peace he forged with Israel made that possible again.

He once said, "The beauty of flying high in the skies will always, to me, symbolize freedom." King Hussein lived his life on a higher plane, with the aviator's gift of seeing beyond the low-flying obstacles of hatred and mistrust that heartbreak and loss place in all our paths. He spent his life fighting for the dignified aspirations of his people and all Arab people. He worked all his life to build friendship between the Jordanian and American people. He dedicated the final years of his life to the promise not only of coexistence but of partnership between the Arab world and Israel.

Indeed, he understood what must be clear now to anyone who has flown above the Middle East and seen in one panorama at sunset the lights of Amman and Tel Aviv and Damascus shining in the sky, that in the relationship among peoples who share this small, sacred corner of Earth, one thing, and only

one, is predestined: All are bound to be neighbors. The question is not whether they will live side by side, but how. God willing, soon all will see what he saw and preached. There can be no peace, no dignity, no security of any of Abraham's children until there is peace, dignity, and security for all of them.

During the Wye summit, when the talks were not going so well, he came out within a few short minutes and changed the tenor of the meeting. Though frail with fighting for his own life, he gave life to the process many felt was failing. The smallest man in the room that day was the largest; the frailest was the strongest. The man with the least time remaining reminded us we are working not only for ourselves but for all eternity.

To Queen Noor, I extend the heartfelt condolences of the American people. At times such as these, words are inadequate. But the friendship that joins Jordan and the United States, for which your marriage stood and your love still stands, that will never fail. You are a daughter of America and a Queen of Jordan. You have made two nations very proud. Hillary and I cherish the wonderful times we shared with you and His Majesty, and today we say to you, and indeed to all the King's large and loving family, our prayers are with you.

We say to his son, the new King Abdullah, we wish you well. Our prayers are with you, as you assume the mantle of your father and grandfather. And to the people of Jordan, again we say, we extend the hand of friendship and partnership.

The Koran teaches: you belong to God, and you return to Him. Today my friend is in Paradise, and God has welcomed home a good and faithful servant.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:02 a.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House.

Proclamation 7167—Death of King Hussein

February 7, 1999

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

Today the world mourns one of its great leaders. A man of principle, a powerful force for good, His Majesty King Hussein was the embodiment of courage, dignity, and wisdom. Steadfast in his support for Middle East peace, he was admired by Americans and beloved by his country. King Hussein was an extraordinary statesman and a true friend of the United States.

As a mark of respect for the memory of King Hussein, I hereby order, by the authority vested in me as President by the Constitution and the laws of the United States of America, that the flag of the United States shall be flown at half-staff upon all public buildings and grounds, at all military posts and naval stations, and on all naval vessels of the Federal Government in the District of Columbia and throughout the United States and its Territories and possessions until his interment. I also direct that the flag shall be flown at half-staff during this same period at all United States embassies, legations, consular offices, and other facilities abroad, including all military facilities and naval vessels and stations.

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand this seventh day of February, in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and ninety-nine, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and twenty-third.

William J. Clinton

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NOTE: This proclamation was published in the *Federal Register* on February 10.